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The Mission of Baptist Churches in European Lands

BY

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The following pages were prepared at the close of a journey made a few years since to countries of Europe in which the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society has given some measure of co-operation in the work of Baptist Churches. Since that time, changes of great moment have occurred in certain lands of Continental Europe, notably in France, Russia, Norway, Portugal and Spain. These changes testify to the certain trend in the life of the world toward recognition of the principles of religious freedom. To this development Baptist Churches must be recognized as having made direct and influential contribution, for wherever found, if true to their profession, they have disseminated ideas which are at the heart of all free institutions. The powerful appeal for practical sympathy and co-operation presented in existing conditions will be apparent to all.

THE MISSION OF BAPTIST CHURCHES IN EUROPEAN LANDS.

By Thomas S. Barbour, Foreign Secretary of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society.

AT one of the annual meetings of the American Baptist Missionary Union held in the city of Detroit, Dr. Lemuel Moss, in referring to the claims upon American Baptists of work in European mission fields, used the following illustration:

A young singer was meeting an engagement at a public concert. The experience was new to her, and her voice trembled and threatened to break. It chanced that an older singer was present to whom the song was familiar. Observing the embarrassment of her young sister, she looked toward her, smiling encouragement, and began to sing softly with her the first strains of the music. Courage returned to the young artist; her voice grew firm, and soon the hall was filled by the rich volume of her song. It is the privilege of our churches to render a like gracious and fraternal service to the little companies who, scattered through European lands, are attempting a song not unfamiliar to American Baptists. A visit made to six of the eight fields in which our work in Europe is carried on has given the writer a keen realization both of the difficulties and the vast importance of the service rendered by these little churches of Europe.

A Work Both Common and Unique

It is apparent that the task set before these Christian disciples is peculiarly involved.

Essentially, it is the same with that of Christian effort in all lands, to win men to acceptance of Christ and to full experience of His indwelling grace. The song these disciples would raise is the full choral of the gospel. But the task of Christian workers, while the same in all lands, varies with the environment in which their work is wrought. A distinctive work set before the dissenting churches of Europe is that of service in behalf of liberty for the soul. This task, obviously, involves more than securing release from restrictions imposed upon these churches by the civil power. This, in itself, would be but a small good. They must seek to secure a genuine acceptance for the principles of religious freedom. It is evident, too, that their work will not end with this. They will desire to secure general acceptance for those allied teachings of Christianity, widely forgotten in the great representative churches of Europe, which underlie genuine acceptance of the principles of religious freedom. It is these features of the task, resulting from peculiar conditions in Europe, which give distinctive interest to a study of Christian work in European countries. It is by success in these efforts Christian disciples are to be set free for full accomplishment of the common aim of Christian effort.

Notable Gains for Religious Freedom

It is evident that in the countries of Europe much advance has been made upon former times in the removal of restrictions and the relief of oppressions from which Baptist churches, in common with other dissenting bodies in the several countries of Europe, have suffered. The story of former days—the horrors of the Spanish Inquisition; the slaughter of the Huguenots; the fires of Smithfield, kindled now for the Protestant and now for the Romanist: the drowning at Zurich of Felix Manz, the lieutenant of

Zwingli; and the burnings in Germany and in Holland of those who, like Manz, "had been rebaptized and persevered in" their baptism—reads like a fable. Everywhere a gain appears in less rigorous laws. Even in Spain and other countries of Europe, where Roman Catholicism holds unbroken control, there is a measure of religious toleration, and extreme forms of persecution are rarely known. In Protestant Europe, the penalties of imprisonment and banishment from which earlier representatives of Baptist churches suffered, as a rule, are no longer imposed. Members of dissenting churches in many parts of the German Empire, in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland, as in England, practically are free as their neighbors of the established churches. Meetings for worship may be held freely and little restraint is put upon public preaching. Among continental countries Norway has an advanced position as respects liberation from the old thraldom. Here, so early as the year 1845, what is known as the "dissenting law" was adopted, securing to all bodies "confessing the Christian faith" large freedom in worship. In Hungary laws are liberal, a contrast being shown in this respect with its twin country, Austria. In Finland, also, where the unique situation is presented of an old established church representing a religious faith differing from that of the governing power, a similar degree of freedom from restraint prevails.

Sentiment in Advance of Law.

A most interesting and significant feature of the situation in Europe in general is shown in the fact that public sentiment in its favor toward liberality is notably in advance of law. A marked illustration of this is to be seen in Sweden, where *the laws* are scarcely more tolerant than in the days of open persecution. The priest of the established Lutheran Church theoretically may secure the punish-

ment of any dissenting preacher, not definitely licensed by the government, who attempts work in his parish. Parliament still refuses to modify the law. The recommendation of the king in favor of adoption of the dissenting law of Norway was defeated. But in recent years, all attempts at prosecution of dissenting pastors under the laws have failed. Such cases are certain upon some pretext to be dismissed by the higher courts. Members of dissenting churches in Sweden are wont to say that if the laws of the country would but conform to actual practice, they could desire little more.

As a further illustration of this relatively advanced state of public sentiment, it is noteworthy that churches in Norway and in Denmark which have not accepted the recognition proffered by the government, practically suffer less restriction in their work than is involved in acceptance of recognition. Evidently, persecution because of opinion is becoming unpopular. There can be little doubt that it is to the power of this more liberal world-sentiment that such immunity as Protestant churches enjoy in Roman Catholic lands is to be attributed. Persecution, because of religious conviction or practices, is frowned upon by the common sentiment of the Western world.

In France, a situation exceptional and of surpassing interest recently has developed. The contest for the release of the schools from the control of ecclesiastical orders has strengthened a movement, long growing, for the complete separation of State and Church.* The forces promoting this movement are not exclusively or primarily Christian, yet the change, if realized, scarcely can fail to give strong impetus to the work of dissenting churches. On a Sunday afternoon of last summer the writer, having attended a service at our Rue Meslay Chapel in Paris, on leaving the locality in company with the pastor,

* The full result was reached in 1905.

Mr. Saillens, passed near the two noble arches now forming the Porte St. Martin and the Porte St. Denis, which constituted the gateways of the Paris of two hundred years ago. These structures were raised in commemoration of victories achieved by King Louis XIV over Protestant Holland and Germany. Scarcely ten years after their erection, the king, stimulated to a crowning effort as Defender of the Faith, signed the act in revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and the storm of persecution broke forth upon the French Huguenots. Conspicuous upon one of these arches is the figure of the king, standing with his foot upon a prostrate form symbolic of Protestantism, while an angel crowns his head with a wreath of laurel. We had scarcely left the ancient arch when a carriage passed us, within which we caught sight of the red hat of a cardinal. The occupant, there is little doubt, was the papal *nuncio,* who on that afternoon withdrew from Paris on his return to Rome, as a result of the strained relations between the French Government and the Vatican.

The Contest Not Yet Ended.

But while these gains give occasion for genuine satisfaction, it is apparent that victory in the contest in which the Baptist churches of Europe are engaged in still far from a full realization. Even the task of securing release from oppressive disabilities is not yet accomplished. Where Roman Catholicism still controls, these disabilities are as serious as the government dare make them in deference to the growing world-sentiment. In Spain, while the law nominally accords freedom of worship, all "public manifestation" of any other than the state religion is disallowed.* Street preaching, the affixing of a sign upon a place of worship, even the erection of a house of worship in a form suggestive of a church edifice, is forbidden. Social persecution is

* The laws have recently been materially modified.

severe, and certainly is not frowned upon by the average governmental official. In some parts of the German Empire, for example in Saxony, conditions are scarcely less hostile. Public services are prohibited, and the holding of private meetings, except as these are specifically licensed. The police are free to attend all meetings of dissenting bodies, and may dissolve them at their pleasure. It is in the power of unfriendly officials to cause much annoyance to the worshipers. Throughout Germany and in Scandinavian countries the public cemeteries are claimed as the property of the established church, and often annoying restrictions are placed upon services connected with the burial of the dead. As a rule, members of a dissenting body are not permitted to teach in a public school, as religious instruction in the schools must accord with the established faith. In Russia, while dissenting worship is permitted among foreign peoples, native Russians are claimed as members of the national Greek Church at birth, and are allowed no exit from its fold.* Dissenting churches are prohibited from influencing adherents of the Greek Church under threat of severe penalties.

In all countries of Europe a church establishment is maintained,† and in the continental countries the establishment is supported by public taxation.‡ Where recognition is offered to dissenting churches, as in the Scandinavian countries, such recognition involves subjection of the church to the civil power, as,

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* The recent edict of religious toleration has relieved these conditions in theory and modified them in practice.

† To this France is now an exception, and Portugal is rapidly advancing to disestablishment. In Germany three churches, Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Reformed, receive support from the government—in Scandinavian countries the Lutheran only.

‡ In parts of Germany exemption from the tax is allowed those giving notice to the government of formal separation from the established church, and in Sweden and Denmark certain minor taxes, e. g., that for the service of pastors of the established church in burial of the dead and in the celebration of marriage, are remitted in the case of members of "recognized churches."

for example, in requirement of official approval of the choice of pastors, and in a practical prohibition of the discipline of its members by exclusion from its fellowship.

The Nature of True Liberty Unrecognized.

It is plain that facts like these indicate not only that the contest for religious freedom is not fully won, but that, even in the freer states of Europe, there is little appreciation of the nature of genuine liberty. So far as the position of civil governments is concerned, it is apparent that the highest attainment thus far reached is that of tolerance of teaching conflicting with that endorsed by the State. The right of State control is not denied; rather it is affirmed, explicitly or implicitly. Coercion on the part of the State is not condemned as illegitimate; it is only disused. Apparently both the employment and the extent of the use of coercion are regarded solely as matters of expediency. Even resort to force in repression of opinions is regarded as unbecoming rather than morally reprehensible. This conviction will hardly be escaped by those considering thoughtfully the attitude of the civil authorities in European countries toward dissenting religious faiths. There could be no more striking proof of the fact that in the concessions made to liberality in European lands the civil power reserves to itself the right to coercion, than is afforded in the action of the British Government in the educational regulations now enforced against the indignant protest of dissenting bodies. Plainly, the citadel of religious despotism is not yet carried in Europe.

The Deeper Work Far from Completion.

And, as recognition and exemplification of a genuine spirit of religious liberty is a good

still to be attained in the established churches of Europe, so it must be recognized that the deeper aim of securing in these organizations recognition of the spiritual nature of genuine religion is still remote from realization. A cold formalism, lifeless ceremonialism and spiritual lethargy, are characteristic of the established churches. The influence of church establishments is directly hostile to recognition of religion as spiritual; for these establishments normally are co-extensive with the State. Entrance into church relationship is by natural birth, or by a ceremony following closely upon natural birth. Regeneration becomes an unknown term, or one to which a merely ceremonial significance is attached. Church ordinances, dismissed from their appointed service as an expression of a conscious, personal, spiritual experience, become channels of sacramental grace. Pastors and members alike are ignorant of personal experience of conversion. Pastors are appointed to their work by the civil ruler or purchase ecclesiastical positions with money. This is church establishment, under whatever name. Where individuals connected with these bodies come to an apprehension of spiritual truth and the enjoyment of spiritual experience, it is in spite of, rather than because of, the influences which a church establishment as such begets.

So large and so hallowed is the task to which Christian believers of a spiritual faith in European lands are called. This is their greater mission, for which the mere annulling of unrighteous laws and release from oppressive exactions will but set them free.

It must not be thought that members of Baptist churches are without allies in their effort to secure this great good. It would be quite superfluous to refer to the devoted character and strongly evangelical conviction of a large body in the fellowship of the Church of England. And like pure spirits are found in other lands. One cannot escape the im-

pression that it is significant that prevalence of evangelical conviction and warmth of spiritual life in established churches in the several countries of Europe are proportional to the strength of evangelical dissenting bodies.

Evangelical Movements in State Churches.

To confine our thought to those countries in which our own mission work is prosecuted, a feature of the existing situation deeply interesting is the development within the established churches of a strong movement representing evangelical conviction and evangelistic methods. These are comparatively of recent origin. Sunday-schools are organized and young people's societies. The building of plain meeting houses for working classes is significant of the ardor with which many, conscious of the defects of their church life, are seeking to remedy existing conditions. In all countries of Europe bodies of devout Christians are found in the established churches, and movements for the promotion of purity in doctrine and an earnest spiritual life are developing under many names. Very interesting is one of these developments, prominent, for example, in the Lutheran churches in Norway, which is known as "The Inner Mission"—a movement within and yet distinct from the established church. Its supporters rarely attend the regular worship of the church; they maintain separate services and separate houses of worship. Yet their work receives support from the established church, which seeks to hold their allegiance; and they refuse to have any part in the worship of dissenting bodies. While recognizing the church as given over to formalism, and dissatisfied with its doctrinal teaching, they are as reluctant to part company with it as John Wesley was to separate from the Church of England.

But it is apparent that the promoters of these movements contend against difficulties which make their attempt well-nigh hopeless. For their effort, from the outset, is embarrassed almost fatally by the teaching and practice of the church with which they are affiliated. Practically, they must concede that all are Christians who are included in the fellowship of the established church. Thus they can invite men only to reformation and not to a new beginning of spiritual life. The evangelical preacher cannot say to his hearers what Christ said to Nicodemus: "Ye must be born again." To give clear testimony concerning the new birth, or to imply that any in his congregation are in need of the regenerating work of the Spirit, would be to excite bitter opposition. Indeed, the pastor has no right to do this while remaining within the church. The Lord's Supper, too, must be administered to all, without discrimination against either immorality or ignorance of vital Christian experience. Some pastors have endeavored to exercise control as to this, but the effort is deeply resented by their fellow-pastors and is inconsistent with their position as teachers in the established church.

Other Dissenting Bodies.

Our Baptist churches have allies also in sister church organizations. Methodist churches, and bodies having some affiliation with Congregationalists, are most prominent among these. As a rule, the membership of these organizations is not large. Besides these churches, there is a considerable company of Christian people who have so far reacted against the rigid organization and the sacerdotalism of church establishments as to reject all formal organization. The Plymouth Brethren, and others known distinctively as followers of Darby, are relatively strong in France, in Spain and in Protestant

Europe. And other groups of people, having scarcely so much as a name, by whom anything suggestive of organization, even enrolling of members, is repudiated, are found in these countries. Besides these fellowships, whose members in their sincere Christian aim are allied with the work to which our Baptist churches are committed, there is a company indefinitely large, both without and within the established churches, who repudiate all religious profession and oppose all religious teaching. These are hostile to a continuance of ecclesiastical authority, and in so far are in alliance with the work Christian bodies are attempting. For example, the Socialist section of the House of Deputies in France, which represents, in general, hostility to all religious teaching, has been strongly influential in the movement for disestablishment.

But, while many are co-operating in this movement, there are indications that in its promotion those who share the convictions represented by Baptist churches have certain advantages over others.

Historical Prominence of Baptists in Promoting Religious Freedom.

Historically, it is conceded, the influence of Baptist churches has been foremost in securing recognition of the principles of religious liberty. In the great movement which developed in Europe after the days of the Renaissance and the Reformation, and which, confined and embarrassed upon the Eastern continent, reached its culmination in America, Baptists confessedly were foremost. It would be impossible for a Baptist to write more confidently of this than others have written. Thus, in the seventeenth century, John Locke, the Unitarian, recorded his conviction that Baptists were the first, and up to that time had been the only promulgators of "abso-

lute liberty, just and true liberty, equal and impartial liberty." So the historian Bancroft, referring to Roger Williams as the first person in modern Christendom to affirm the doctrine of the rights of conscience, adds: "Freedom of conscience was from the first a trophy of the Baptists." And Dr. Leonard Bacon, widely honored as a leader in the Congregationalist body, writes: "It has been claimed for Baptist churches that, from the age of the Reformation onward, they have been always foremost and always consistent in maintaining the doctrine of religious liberty. Let me not be understood as calling in question their right to so great an honor."

It is not unnatural to believe that the little Baptist churches found through European lands, from the straits of Gibraltar to beyond the Arctic Circle, are holding a similar prominence in securing to the countries of Europe the large good which all men of generous impulse must covet for them. To say this is not to claim personal superiority for those connected with these churches. It is obvious that whatever advantage they enjoy is traceable to their use of weapons mighty for the pulling down of the strongholds of ecclesiasticism and formal worship.

Clear Avowal of Freedom of Conscience.

For these churches possess the advantage derived from a definite, consistent affirmation of religious liberty. The clear teaching which has been heard wherever Baptist churches, or men of conviction identifying them with Baptist churches, have appeared, which expressed itself in England thirty-three years before the Westminster Confession committed itself to an opposite teaching is heard in the countries of Europe: "The magistrate by virtue of his office is net to meddle with religion or matters of conscience, nor to compel men to this or that form of religion, but to leave the

Christian religion to the free conscience of any one."*

And advocacy of religious freedom by Baptist churches is not characteristically a plea for themselves. It is a demand for recognition of the rights of all, evangelical and unevangelical, Christian and non-Christian. In the state of Rhode Island, founded when the followers of Roger Williams had complete control, notwithstanding the example set by church establishments and the prevalence of religious intolerance in neighboring states, a constitution was adopted guaranteeing "absolute liberty for all beliefs and practices not conflicting with good order and good morals." A Baptist church would dishonor its name if it should fail to contend for "just and true liberty, equal and impartial liberty."

But if we would recognize fully the advantage belonging to Baptist churches in their effort to promote ideal conditions in Europe, we must look beneath their formal confession of religious freedom. For it must be held that devotion to religious liberty is itself a resultant of deeper forces. The thoughtful student of the history of Baptist churches cannot fail to recognize that it is not by accident that respect for the rights of conscience has been found invariable among the tenets of Baptists; this belief has appeared always in conjunction with, and as the product of, more elemental convictions.

Consistent Testimony to Religion as Spiritual.

We recognize then among the forces promoting the service of Baptist churches their clear, consistent teaching regarding the spirituality of true religion. This teaching is emphasized and made conspicuous by the fact that, among Baptists, only those making confession of an experience of divine renewal are received into membership in the church or

* From the Confession of English Baptists in 1614.

recognized in an ordinance of the church. Recognition of the spirituality of religion may justly be regarded as the central principle in the conviction of Baptist churches. This was the great discovery breaking upon those who, in many ages and lands, separated themselves from established ecclesiastical organizations—Religion is a personal relationship between a free soul and the personal God, and nothing else is religion. From this central position obviously the well-known characteristic positions of Baptist churches result directly—the worthlessness of forms as such, restriction of religious ordinances to those participating in them by personal choice, the authority of accredited divine teaching, the right of every individual to seek for himself, and to follow, divine teaching and guidance, the criminality of interference with the free discharge of this personal right and accountability. All these positions follow by necessity from the conviction that religion is a voluntary personal relation with the personal God.

It is clear that this central teaching not only represents a vast good in itself, but is the root principle of religious freedom. State establishments became an impossibility, since a true church membership must rest on a spiritual basis. Coercion becomes an impossibility; if used, its results would be worthless. It is told of one Ternoot, who suffered at the stake in England in 1575, that he died saying: "They who have the true doctrine will not persecute." True religion belongs to another realm than that in which the civil power rules.

Repudiation of Sacramental Grace

A further advantage of Baptist churches in the mission to which they are committed is found in their definite, consistent rejection of the doctrine of sacramental grace. The belief that saving grace is communicated through the sacraments of the church is the bulwark of

Church establishments. Historically, it has been the bulwark of coercion. It has been always the alleged justification, and often, without doubt, the true cause, of the use of force in dealing with heresy; the belief has prevailed that these heretical persons must be won back to the church or suffer hopeless loss.

This teaching of sacramental grace Baptist Churches have repudiated, and that consistently. All ceremonial is discarded except as it represents personal confession of an inward experience of divine grace. Where a church ceremony is extended to infancy, declaration of the worthlessness of ceremonies is obscured. To retain pure ceremonialism in any form apparently is to concede the principle of sacramental grace; and protest against the work of the deadly octopus which stifles the religious life of European lands is weakened or destroyed. Baptist churches, more consistently than others, through abandonment of every ordinance not expressive of conscious relationship to Christ, oppose the doctrine of sacramental grace.

The Affirmation of the Principle of Loyalty

One other advantage possessed by Baptist churches in their service for European lands is found in their consistent advocacy of loyalty to divine authority. This principle, too, is the direct product of the central principle in Baptist teaching, and is itself a root principle from which the affirmation of religious liberty is a certain development. The Confession of English Baptists in 1644 affirms, "There is but one law-giver concerning the worship of God, that is Jesus Christ; so, it is the magistrate's duty to tender the liberty of men's consciences, without which all other liberties will not be worth the having." Indeed, in the Christian Scriptures, the right of man to freedom from human constraint is corollary

to the supreme principle of loyalty to God. It may be doubted if any passage of the New Testament contains more significant teaching regarding human liberty than is found in the injunction of our Lord, "Call no man your master upon earth, for one is your master in heaven."

This principle of loyalty to divine authority, rightly viewed, will not be thought unattractive. Some, indeed, are misled at this point. Emphasis upon the duty of loyalty seems to them to restrain and repel. The mistake is illustrated in those bodies in Europe which fancy that freedom from organization will commend them to the favor of the people. The tendency to abandon all requirement in connection with church membership, leaving action in relation to church ordinances wholly to the preference of the people, is marked in these countries. It is perhaps natural that reaction from the rigid organization of the established churches, and the assertion, so popular in France, of "liberty, equality and fraternity" should dispose some to abandonment of rule and order in the church. But thoughtful men are not likely to be attracted by this. It is not freedom from requirement—the obliteration of safe rules for human guidance—for which nobler hearts are longing. It is rather the substituting for standards representing only fallible and arbitrary authority, a standard in which the soul may confide. The thoughtful mind will be inclined to affirm that it is by its revelation of trustworthy instruction and authority, quite as truly as by the lesson of liberty, that Christian teaching commends itself to the heart of mankind.

Unguarded Liberty Perilous

The affirmation of loyalty supplies a defect which the serious mind cannot fail to recognize, in advocacy of liberty, as illustrated by many. For liberty in itself is not a supreme good; it may end in catastrophe. It is not

alone the ignoble and bigoted in the national churches of Europe who contend strongly for the perpetuation of church establishments. Many noble minds shrink with a great apprehension from the thought of a disestablishment which to them is synonymous with blank unbelief and lawlessness. It is not strange that some believe that the adoption and maintenance of standards representing the judgment and experience of the wisest in the land, is to be preferred to the abandonment of mankind to no other guidance than the caprice of individual impulse or the shiftings of popular sentiment. To such souls some reassurance must be given if the principles of liberty are to triumph. Let the truth be received that all men are called to direct relation to the Supreme Ruler; that it is their privilege to receive guidance from Him, and to yield personal obedience to Him; then, restraint upon human liberty becomes the extremest crime which can be committed against the soul of man. The State may not speak because God has spoken. Man may not control because the soul may hear for itself the voice of God.

Baptist teaching, if true to its history and to its central formative principle, presents to the world this thought of unswerving loyalty to the authority of God. It stands for confidence in the Christian Scriptures as presenting divinely accredited instruction as to truth and duty. Even its adherence to a peculiar ceremony is significant of its conviction of the sacredness of loyalty.

In the city of Copenhagen, the fine old courthouse bears upon its facade a motto copied from the introduction to a code of laws of the twelfth century: "With law shall we build the land." With law must the worthy life and the prevailing Church and the enduring State be builded.

It is for these reasons we must believe that the service which Baptist churches in Europe are quietly accomplishing will be found in the

end both vastly influential and benignant. These little church buildings, strewn through European lands, represent a great good. However few in number or humble in station their worshipers may be, they are conserving and scattering seed in which is the promise of a harvest that one day shall make glad the lands.

A Goodly Fellowship

To these characteristic principles our brethren in continental Europe are standing true. To meet with leaders and people is to be impressed with the simplicity and strength of the convictions controlling them. In all essentials of belief and practice, many among them seem mature and resolute as their brethren in lands in which the position of Baptist churches is strongly established. These men are true successors of the faithful confessors of the past, and true fellow-workers of all in our own land who are devoted to liberty and the upbuilding of spiritual life. To these workers our warmest sympathy and our practical cooperation should not fail to be extended. They are still only a little company. While in the United States Baptists number more than one in twenty of the population, in Sweden they are but one in 120; in Denmark, one in 500; in Norway, one in 800; in Finland, one in 1,200; in Germany, one in 1,700; in Russia, dominated by the Greek Church, one in 6,000*; in Roman Catholic France, one in 17,000; in priest-ridden Spain, one in 135,000. It is their lot to fight in the common warfare where the battle is hardest. They contend against powerful social influences. Their houses of worship are humble as compared with the costly structures of wealthy church organizations. Lethargy and indifference begotten by the formalism of State churches make their task difficult. The steady, unre-

* Now 1 in 1450 if a recent estimate of the total number of those virtually Baptists is accepted.

mitting drain upon their membership, particularly in Protestant Europe, through emigration to America, saps their strength. To us this tidal movement is a movement of incoming to which these churches contribute the best elements of social and spiritual strength; with them, it is a movement of outgoing, carrying from them those least willingly spared. It costs no little resolution and patriotic devotion to hold young men in whom ambition is strong to the task given to these churches in the life of Europe.

But, though few, and contending against great odds, the members of these churches are waging their contest with a stout heart and a buoyant hopefulness. And the issue of the struggle cannot be doubted. John Adams said to the two Baptist leaders, Isaac Backus and President Manning of Brown University, when, in the year 1774, they came to the Continental Congress to plead the great ideals of religious liberty: "We might as well expect to change the solar system as to expect that the States will give up their establishments." But the States have given up their establishments, and in the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States it is provided: "Congress shall make no laws respecting religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

There is a noble musical composition, an overture by the Russian artist, Tschaikovsky, which finds its theme in the supreme struggle of the army of Napoleon and the forces of Russia. The national hymns of France and Russia furnish the double motive of the music. At first the stirring strains of the Marseillaise are heard, clear, resounding, jubilant. But the listener catches at length in a faint cadence a strain of the national hymn of Russia. For a moment it sounds, and then is lost to the ear; but soon it recurs in a more protracted movement. Gradually the French anthem falters and breaks; its notes become less

confident. So the rival songs struggle in the supreme conflict. But the strains of the Russian hymn grow clearer and stronger, until at length the Marseillaise, overwhelmed by the rival music, is heard no more; and in an outburst of viols and drums and trumpets, bells and organ, the national hymn of Russia exults in victory.

Such is the contest in which these little churches of Europe contend against a power, haughty and strong. But the strains of their song already are becoming familiar to an increasing company outside their immediate fellowship. Its melody, indeed, is but the interpretation of music sounding faintly in every human heart. And so surely as the future holds victory for God and truth, one day the Russian, the Frenchman, the German, the Spaniard, and men of every speech, regaining their native utterance, shall, with united voices, acclaim the triumph of the principles to which these little companies of Christian disciples have been so bravely true.